

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1052

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor Motown music legend Diana Ross.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pay tribute to those gifted artists who enrich the cultural landscape of our State and uphold the sonic legacy of Music City through Motown music, the resounding heartbeat of the rock and roll era; and

WHEREAS, Diana Ross is a Motown music icon who has been entertaining fans since childhood; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Ross was born in Detroit, Michigan, on March 26, 1944, the second of six children of Fred and Ernestine Ross, who lived in Brewster-Douglass, one of Detroit's low-income housing districts; and

WHEREAS, because of her tight-knit family, Diana grew up virtually unaware of the harsh life that surrounded her; and

WHEREAS, her family was active in the local Baptist church choir, but Ms. Ross learned secular music from a cousin, played baseball, and took tap dance and majorette lessons at Brewster Center; and

WHEREAS, at the tender age of fourteen, Diana Ross was invited to sing with the Primettes, a girls' vocal group that included Florence Ballard and Mary Wilson among its members. The male counterparts of the group were called the Primes, and their members included Paul Williams and Eddie Kendricks, who would later form part of the Motown superstar group the Temptations; and

WHEREAS, Diana sang with the Primettes during her time at Cass Technical High School and Motown superstar Smokey Robinson introduced the group at Motown Studios, which they visited frequently until they met Motown producer Berry Gordy; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gordy instructed the girls to finish high school and come back to the studio, which they did in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Ross, Ms. Ballard, and Ms. Wilson then signed a contract with Motown and Ms. Ballard selected a name for the group, the Supremes; and

WHEREAS, the Supremes released several singles and often sang background vocals for such artists as Marvin Gaye and Mary Wells; and

WHEREAS, “Let Me Go the Right Way” became the first Supremes song to register on the national charts and it enabled the group to join the touring Motor Town Revue; and

WHEREAS, “Where Did Our Love Go?” was the group’s first national number one hit. It sold over two million singles and pushed the Supremes into the limelight as the Revue’s opening act; and

WHEREAS, Diana’s ambition and pure talent helped the trio gain notoriety at Motown, and she became the group’s lead singer; and

WHEREAS, the Supremes lead Motown music into its prime in the 1960s with a series of number one hits that included “Baby Love” (1964), “Stop! In the Name of Love” (1965), “Back in My Arms Again” (1965), “I Hear A Symphony” (1966), “You Keep Me Hangin’ On” (1966), “You Can’t Hurry Love” (1966), “Love Is Here and Now You’re Gone” (1967), and “The Happening” (1967); and

WHEREAS, in 1967, the group became known as Diana Ross and the Supremes and, that same year, Florence Ballard was replaced by Cindy Birdsong; and

WHEREAS, by 1968, rumors were circulating that Ms. Ross was leaving the group, and they reached their peak after her successful performance on the 1969 television special, *Like Hep*; and

WHEREAS, Diana’s last single with the group was the number one hit “Someday, We’ll Be Together” (1969), and she began her solo career after their last appearance together in January 1970; and

WHEREAS, Motown Records invested heavily in Ms. Ross's new career, which debuted with "Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)" (1970) and, at this time, Diana Ross helped the Jackson Five get its start with Motown and Berry Gordy, and she moved into her new home in Beverly Hills, California; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, Diana was joined in holy matrimony with Robert Silberstein, a pop-music manager with whom she had three daughters, Rhonda, Tracee, and Chudney, and whom she divorced in 1975; and

WHEREAS, longing for even greater outlets for her artistic talents, Ms. Ross made her acting debut when she was cast as the legendary jazz singer Billie Holiday in the Motown film production *Lady Sings the Blues*, a critically acclaimed performance which earned Diana an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. She went on to star in several film, Broadway, and television roles, including *Mahogany* (1975), *An Evening With Diana Ross* (1976-77), and *The Wiz* (1978); and

WHEREAS, Diana Ross continued to perform in concerts in Atlantic City and Las Vegas casinos and at charity functions; and

WHEREAS, her 1980 single, "Upside Down," was her sixteenth number one hit, a record surpassed only by the Beatles; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, she moved to Connecticut with her three children and married Norwegian businessman Arne Naess, Jr., and, in 1989, she made a return to Motown with a new album, *Workin' Overtime*; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Diana worked with Stevie Wonder and other artists to make *The Force Behind the Power*, a group of modern ballads and, in January of 1994, she was highly praised for her role as a mental patient in the ABC television movie *Out of Darkness*; and

WHEREAS, the magical sounds and ethereal pleasures of the exquisite voice this lovely lady possesses have entertained her devoted fans for decades, and an infinite wealth of music written, performed, and canonized by Diana Ross will stand as a testament of her genuine talent and abilities; and

WHEREAS, Diana Ross has created an indelible legacy of music that reflects her passion and undaunted diligence to attain greatness in her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to recognize with gratitude and compassion the bountiful career and the everlasting beauty of the voice of this exceptional music icon; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Diana Ross, the most successful female singer of the rock and roll era, applaud her for her illustrious and bountiful career and her many, many gifts of music and song which have brought pleasure and satisfaction to people all over the world, and extend to her our best wishes for every continued success in all her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.